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The GOOD of AFFLICTION.

A
S E R M O N
O N

J O H N xvi. 33.

Delivered at the
Parish-Church of St. *Anne, Limehouse,*
On Trinity-Sunday, 1760.

Preached and Printed pursuant to the last Will
and Testament of

Captain JOHN SIBSON,
Who departed this Life the Fifth Day of May.

By T. JONES, M. A.
Chaplain of St. SAVIOUR's, Southwark.

*We must through much Tribulation enter into the King-
dom of GOD. ACTS xiv. 22.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for E. DILLY, at the *Rose and Crown* in
the *Poultry*. M.DCC.LX.

The Good of Affliction.

A

S E R M O N

ON

JOHN XVI. 33.

Delivered at the

Pavilion-Church of St. Anne, Limehouse,

On Thursday, the 27th of

Preached and Published by the Rev. Wm.



Captain JOHN STURSON.

Who departed this Life the Fifth Day of May.

By T. JONES, M. A.

Chaplain of the Savoy, &c. &c.

We may observe that this is the last of the

LONDON.

Printed for E. Dilly, at the Sign of the Crown in

T O
MRS. SIBSON.

M A D A M,

AS you are so much interested in the awful Event, which was the Occasion of the following Discourse, you are certainly the properest Person, to whom it should be addressed.

PERMIT me, then, to beg your kind Acceptance of it, with my sincerest Wishes and Prayers, that it may be made useful to you under your present Visitation.

I have not the Happiness to be acquainted with you, but it gives

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me

iv **DEDICATION.**

me real Pleasure to hear, that you have “ chosen the good Part,” and are eager to secure the “ one Thing “ needful.”

I sincerely congratulate your Choice, and pray GOD that every Affliction may bring you nearer to Himself, and evidently work to your eternal Good!

I am, with great Respect,

M A D A M,

Your most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

Castle-street, Southwark,

June 12th, 1760.

T. JONES.

JOHN, xvi. 33. latter Clause.

*In the World ye shall have Tribulation; but
be of good Cheer, I have overcome the
World.*

THESE Words are the Conclusion
of that affectionate and pathetic
Speech our LORD made to his
Disciples, when he was about to “leave the
“ World and go unto his Father.” He
prepares them by that tender and well-
tim’d Address, for the awful Surprize his
Sufferings and Death must necessarily give
them.

HE lets them know * how expedient it
was that he should “go away” from this
lower World, that he might reign for ever
in Heaven, and from thence send down

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* Verse 7—15.

such Gifts and Graces upon his Church, as should train her up to share with him in his Kingdom and Glory.

AND, as our Saviour acquaints his Disciples with the near Approach of his Sufferings; so doth he take care to arm them * against the rude Attacks which were shortly to be made upon their own Persons. In the Verse preceding the Text, he tells them that, little as they *then* intended it, they would ere long, be so staggered by the Violence of Temptation, as to decline for a Season, the spiritual Warfare, and forsake him in his deepest Distress. “ Behold
 “ the Hour cometh, yea is now come, that
 “ ye shall be scattered every Man to his
 “ own, and shall leave me alone.” But that they might not conclude from hence, that he was unequal to the Task before him, he immediately subjoins, “ and
 “ yet I am not alone because the Father
 “ is with me.”

Now,

* Ch. xv. 20, 21.

Now, lest this his poor distressed Family should be "swallowed up with over much sorrow" for their Master's Sufferings and their own Infirmary, or imagine his Affection for them was abated by his foreseeing they would thus desert him; he kindly soothes their Grief, and dispels their Fears, by telling them, Verse 33, "These Things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have Peace." He foretold his Sufferings to convince them of his Divinity, in being able to give them so circumstantial an Account of what was still future, to prepare them for the worst, and to direct them where they might find a solid Peace and Tranquility, however the Storm of Affliction might blow around them. All who are in him by a living Faith, are at Peace with GOD, and enjoy an inward Peace and Serenity in their own Breasts. The blessed JESUS, "The Prince of Peace," (as he is stiled *Isaiab* ix. 6.) forgot not his little Flock, but was providing for its Peace and Security, at the very Time he himself was exposed to the greatest Injuries, to an ignominious and cruel Death. Nor is our benevolent

Redeemer less tender and affectionate in the latter Clause of the Verse, wherein he thus bids them a kind Farewel.

“ IN the World ye shall have Tribulation, but be of good Cheer, I have overcome the World.”

WHILE you continue in this “ Vale of Tears,” a Variety of Distress awaits you : But, be not disheartened, yea rather rejoice, for I, your Friend and Saviour, have subdued the World, and rendered it a conquered Foe.

As these Words were “ written for our Admonition,” it is our Interest as well as Duty, to examine what Lesson of Instruction they contain.

TO assist our Meditations on this affecting Passage, I shall endeavour to shew,

1st, That Tribulation is the Christian's Lot, during his Continuance here below.
“ In the World ye shall have Tribulation.”

2dly,

2dly, That nevertheless, the Christian has Reason to be of good Courage.
 “ Be of good Cheer, I have overcome the
 “ World.”

A Practical Application of the whole, will conclude what I have to offer upon the Subject.---And may the Spirit of the living GOD vouchsafe his Blessing on what shall be delivered either out of his Word, or agreeable to the same !

1st THEN, I am to shew, that Tribulation is the Christian's Lot during his Continuance here below. “ In the World ye
 “ shall have Tribulation.”

“ MAN * is born to Trouble as the
 “ Sparks fly upward.” The World we live in is a Scene of Sorrow, and is daily exhibiting fresh Instances of its Inability to satisfy an immortal Soul. The Inhabitants of the Earth are eagerly pursuing some favourite Schemes of Happiness; but, by the Uneasiness and Discontent observable

* Job v. 7.

able among them, they all, with one Consent, proclaim, the Blessing, they are in Quest of, mocks their Pursuit, and flies far from them. The Reason of which Disquietude is plainly this: Man is a fallen Creature: He derives a sinful and polluted Nature from his first Parents: This evil Nature sets him at a Distance from GOD, the only Fountain of Happiness. The Divine Image at first impressed on the Soul of Man, not only bespoke his high Original, but afforded him a constant Source of Joy and Happiness. While he preserved his primitive Innocence, a pleasing Communion with GOD kept him free from every Disturbance, blessed him with inward Peace and Tranquility, and made him as happy as his Heart could wish.----But, no sooner had he broke the Divine Command, than the heavenly Image was defaced, his former Happiness deserted him, and left an aching Void in his Heart, which no earthly Enjoyments can fill up, no worldly Aid relieve, nothing less than GOD can satisfy. A Man's own Heart will tell him, that he is, by
Nature,

Nature, the miserable Creature above described, dissatisfied with almost every thing about him, ever in pursuit of some Happiness, he knows he wants, but is at a Loss how to attain. The sacred Scriptures will acquaint him with the Reason of all this; namely, that he is descended from an impure Original; that he “ * was “ shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did his “ Mother conceive him.” He is there told † that the Guilt of his first Parents is imputed, and he finds, by wretched Experience, that their evil Nature is imparted to him.----The whole Scheme of Christianity layeth down this for its Foundation, *viz.* That Man is a fallen Creature, and stands in Need of that Redemption and Deliverance, this Scheme proposeth. What Wonder then, that Mankind should be exposed to such a Variety of inward and outward Trials, when Scripture and Experience acquaint us, they have drawn it down upon themselves by their departing from the living GOD? If, more especial-
ly

* Psalm li. 5.

† Rom. v. 12.

ly we take into our Account the many actual Sins and Transgressions every one's own Conscience accuse him of, we must be self-condemned, and say "Thou * art
 " just in all that is brought upon us ; for
 " thou hast done right, but we have done
 " wickedly."

THIS is the only rational Account that can be given of the Origin of Evil. This at once clears all the Attributes of God, and lays the Blame of Sin at the proper Door. By this Account too, we are no longer at a Loss for the Reason why this World should present us with so much Uneasiness and Vexation ; since we are taught, that Sin hath set every Man's Hand against his Brother, and made us the unhappy Instruments of each other's Trials. Indeed, where the Benefits of Education, the Advantages of civil Society, and particularly the Blessings of Christianity have polished and refined Men's Manners, much of this Evil is abated. The kind Providence of God interposing
 in

* Neh. ix 33.

in our Behalf, hath directed us how to blunt the Edge of various Calamities, and in some Instances, to turn Crosses themselves into Blessings. But yet, we have Inconveniencies enough remaining to justify the Scripture Assertion, too many Proofs of the fallen Nature of Man, and of his Guilt and Misery on that Account. War, Pestilence, Famine, Diseases and Death, are the dreadful Train, Sin hath brought in with it, and one or other of them affords a constant Fund of Trouble to the Sons of Men.

I HAVE dwelt the longer on this Subject, not only to account for that Variety of Afflictions we are encompassed with, but also to vindicate the Providence of GOD from the Accusations of mistaken Men. For whoever considers this Matter attentively must observe, that the Tribulation, this World abounds with, is not the Result of an arbitrary Designation of our Creator, but the natural and unavoidable Consequence of our Rebellion against him. So long as the Heart of Man is unconverted and estranged from GOD, (who alone can give us the Happiness we

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lost

lost in Adam) he must be miserable in any Situation, and will carry his own Tormentor with him, let him change his Place as often as he will.

NAY, so far from impeaching the divine Perfections, are "the Sufferings of this " Life," that they rather magnify the Goodness of GOD to his sinful Creatures. As this World is not our Home, but we are passing through it with an incredible Swiftnefs, to an eternal State; how good, how gracious is it in our heavenly Father, thus to write Vanity on every Creature-Comfort, and thereby call off our Attention from the Objects of Sense, from an unsatisfying, perishing World; to seek " his Kingdom which cannot be moved," and his Favour " which is better than Life " itself." This is a Method he often uses with the Children of Men, and many an exemplary Christian has had Reason to say, " before I was troubled I went wrong." Afflictions soften the human Heart, and prepare it to receive the " good Seed," which is " the Word of GOD."* And when the Sinner is humbled by his Trou-
bles,

* Luke viii. 11.

bles, and returns to his gracious Redeemer, he will then acknowledge with the Psalmist, “ it is good for me, that I have
“ been afflicted.”

LET us not then arraign the Justice of our Sovereign LORD, but make a becoming Use of the Disasters of Life, by calling upon GOD for his heavenly Grace, to wean our Affections from this World, and to fix our Hearts on that spiritual and divine Life, wherein “ true Joys are to be
“ found.” Besides what has been said in Vindication of the Dealings of GOD with the Sons of Men, let us remember that he hath made a full and ample Provision for their Recovery. “ * GOD so loved the
“ World, that he sent his only begotten
“ Son, that whosoever believeth in him
“ should not perish, but have everlasting
“ Life.” What we lost in Adam is abundantly made up to us by JESUS CHRIST. If the Guilt of the former is imputed to his Posterity, the perfect Righteousness of the latter is imputed also to his faithful People. For, “ † as by one Man’s Dis-
“ obedience, many were made Sinners ; so
C 2 “ by

* John iii. 16.

† Rom. v. 19.

“ by the Obedience of one shall many be
 “ made righteous.” As our first Parent
 hath entailed Misery and Death on all who
 persist in *his* Rebellion, so the second *A-*
dam hath purchased Life and Peace for his
 real Disciples, for he is “ the † Au-
 “ thor of eternal Salvation unto all them
 “ that obey him.” Behold, then, a glo-
 rious Display of the divine Philanthropy!
 God himself becomes the Sinner’s Friend
 and Surety, and puts him into a Method
 to convert his worst Troubles into the most
 substantial Blessings. This Consideration,
 as we shall see hereafter, will support the
 Christian under his Afflictions, and enable
 him to glorify God in the Fire of Tri-
 bulation.

It would be almost endless to recite the
 numerous Troubles the Christian is ex-
 posed to, in common with the rest of his
 Fellow Creatures. But, besides these,
 there are certain Trials affect the Believer
 as such, and often distinguish him from
 the Generality of Men. But before I pro-
 ceed farther, it may not be amiss to ob-
 serve what the Term, *Christian*, implies.
 Now

• Heb. v. 9.

Now, by this Word, I would not be understood to mean a Person, who makes only a bare Profession of Christianity, but one who is a Christian in Deed and in Truth. One, who from a Consciousness of his own Vileness, has fled for Refuge to the LORD Jesus Christ by a living Faith, and hath received with Thankfulness the free Salvation he came to purchase. One, whose Faith is wrought in him by the holy Spirit, and discovers itself in a Life of Holiness and uniform Obedience to the Will of God. This, I apprehend, is the true Definition of a Christian, and in this Sense, I desire to be understood, wherever the Terms Christian or Believer occur in this Discourse.

OF such an one we affirm, that Tribulation is his Lot, during his Pilgrimage here below. And this a Tribulation, which is often peculiar to the Christian as such. It is not uncommon to see the true Believer exercised with sundry Afflictions. Now, this is not only a striking Argument for the Truth and Certainty of a future State, wherein these seemingly unequal Distributions shall be set right, but a Proof also

so of that peculiar Relation, the Believer stands in to the most High. For “ * whom
 “ the LORD loveth he chasteneth and
 “ scourgeth every Son whom he receiv-
 “ eth.”

INGRATITUDE and Treachery of pretended Friends, the Resentment and Malice of enraged Enemies, teach him the Vanity of the Creature, and incline him to a still closer Union with that Friend, who never faileth nor deceiveth. Disappointments in Life wean him from the World, and prompt him to pursue that true Felicity, which no Force, nor Fraud can deprive him of. Frequent Sickness, and all the painful Attendants on a feeble Constitution, read him a silent but instructive Lecture on his own Mortality, and bid him turn his Eyes to a glorious Resurrection, when “ this corruptible Body” shall “ press down the Soul” no longer, when “ this earthly Tabernacle” shall no more “ weigh down the Mind, “ which museth upon many Things.” Another Trial the Believer in JESUS must expect, is Persecution from the World.
 This

* Heb. xii. 6.

This seems to be the principal Meaning of the Word "Tribulation" in our Text. However fair the Christian might stand with the Men of the World before his Conversion; no sooner does he renounce his former Sins, and seek in earnest the Kingdom of Heaven, than they declare War against him. Openly deriding, or secretly reviling him, and trying every Expedient to bring him back to his former evil Courses. And, although outward, violent Persecution is a Stranger in this happy Island; yet the Believer finds Tribulation enough to exercise his Faith and Patience, to convince him that " * the " Friendship of the World is Enmity with " GOD." While he continued a Rebel to his God, he had the World's Esteem; but upon his true Repentance, he must expect according to his more publick or private Station, to feel more or less of its Resentment.

Now the Use the Believer makes of all these Troubles, is to glorify that God, who chasteneth him in this Life, that he may not be condemned with the World.

* Jam. iv. 4.

World. He examines his own Heart, to see for what particular Sins these Visitations are respectively sent, and humbles himself under the mighty Hand of God. He pours out his Heart in earnest Prayer, that these Afflictions may be sanctified, that Patience may have its perfect Work, and that all the Graces of the blessed Spirit, may be brought into Act, and Exercise by him. His Prayer is heard, and he hath Faith given him to see "all these Afflictions working together," for his real, his eternal Good.

I might also mention the great Tribulation which the Children of God experience at Times, from their own Hearts, and from the dangerous Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.--- But, as I have drawn out this Head to a greater Length than I intended, it is Time for us to consider, that notwithstanding Tribulation is the Christian's Lot, yet

2dly, HE hath abundant Reason to be of good Courage. "Be of good Cheer. "I have overcome the World." In this I shall be very brief.

OUR

OUR blessed Redeemer hath not left his Church without a suitable Relief under her Troubles. He who hath bought the Believer with his own Blood, is leading him through these Tribulations to the Kingdom of GOD. Discouraging as outward Trials are to mere Flesh and Blood, the Christian's Grief is most powerfully asswaged by that glorious Hope that is set before him. "Be of good Cheer," saith our LORD to his Disciples. *Θαρσύνετε*, be confident, be courageous : * *the Word signifieth Boldness, implying that our Confidence in GOD, causeth Boldness and Courage.*

AN hard Lesson this, to be chearful, to be courageous and rejoice under heavy Afflictions! But, when we consider the Reason our Saviour gives us for this cheerful Patience in Tribulation, we may cease to wonder. "I have overcome the "World." Bitter Enemy as it is, to the Disciples of the Lamb, he hath vanquished and entirely routed its numerous Hosts. He hath conquered the Prince of this World, and reserved him in "everlasting
D "Chains

* Leigh's Crit. Sacr.

“ Chains under Darkneſs unto the Judgment of the great Day.” Then ſhall the Saints of GOD be Witneſſes of their Saviour’s Triumph. The Chriſtian is to remember, that his Maſter overcame the World by ſuffering all it could lay upon him. By his meritorious Death and Bloodſhedding, he hath made a perfect Atonement to the Father’s Juſtice, for the Sins of Men, and hath purchaſed for them eternal Life. By theſe Sufferings, the Enemy of our Souls, “ the Prince of this “ World,” hath received a mortal Blow. Death too, another of the Sinner’s Adverſaries, is diſarmed of its Sting, and the Doors of everlaſting Happineſs are now thrown open, and every poor returning Penitent is ſure to find an eaſy, a welcome Admittance.

ALL theſe Afflictions then, to a Soul, truly juſtified through JESUS CHRIST, are no more than the gentle Corrections of a tender Father. The View of future Blisſ ſupports the Believer in his preſent Pilgrimage, he knows his Troubles can have but a ſhort Duration, and his chief Deſire is to glorify God by a pious and cheerful

cheerful Submission to his righteous Will. The Contempt and Reproach of the World now sit easy on him, since his Master hath so overcome it, as to render all its Threats and Malice feeble and impotent; he fears not the World therefore, “ which cannot kill the Soul,” but is rather sollicitous to “ fear him, who “ is able to destroy both Body and Soul “ in Hell.”

AGAIN, as our dear Redeemer hath overcome the World *for* his People; he also overcomes it *in* them, by arming them with his Grace and holy Spirit, by enduing them with Patience, deadening them to the Things of this World, weaning their Affections from it, and raising them to sublimer Objects. In short, he giveth them a “ Victory that” most effectually “ overcometh the World, even “ Faith” in him. But, as I am fearful of trespassing too much on your Time, I cannot enlarge on this pleasing Subject. I shall therefore make a short Application of the whole, and so conclude.

AND 1st, let us learn from the World's Inability to give us real Happiness, not

to fix our Hearts and Minds upon it. Its greatest Pleasures are dear bought, very short-liv'd, and too often detain the Heart from pursuing its truest, its everlasting Interest. Let the various Crosses and Trials we meet with, lead us to our Saviour's Throne, that we may find " Grace " to help in Time of Need." The real Christian may consider them as Tokens of his Father's Love, and draw unspeakable Comfort from the Consideration. But how unhappy must your Case be, who are surrounded with Afflictions, and yet remain Strangers to the solid Comfort true Religion inspires? let me entreat you to consider wherefore you are thus afflicted. Look upon your various Disappointments, as so many gracious Calls from God to bring you home to himself. Long have you wandered from him, long hath he had Patience with you. But Oh! take Heed, I beseech you, lest if none of these Things move you, ye be at length involved in everlasting Ruin. Be ye well assured, that so long as you are Strangers to that dear Redeemer, who endured so much for Sinners---you have no Reason to expect a Blessing from Heaven,

ven, upon any Thing you undertake. Remember withal, your Breath is in your Nostrils, and if you die in your Sins, nothing can save you from the Damnation of Hell.---

BUT happy you who are returning Home to your adorable Saviour, in true Repentance. Your Afflictions, it should seem, have indeed been sanctified, by rousing you from your carnal Security, and inclining your Hearts to seek the LORD. Fear not to draw nigh unto him. He will most certainly receive you, and if you are sincere, "neither do I condemn thee," is the harshest Language he will give you.

AGAIN, let such as are united to our Saviour, by a living Faith, be thankful for the Privileges they are entitled to. Let them remember they are "called to * Glory" hereafter, and to "Virtue" here, as the Road that leads to it. They are to improve every Affliction, as an instructive Lesson, to teach them Submission to the Will of GOD. Nor let them be dejected amidst the severest Trials, since "He who is higher than the Highest regardeth"

* 2 Pet. i 3.

“ deth” them ; and will make these “ light
 “ Afflictions which are but for a Moment
 “ work out for them, a far more exceed-
 “ ing and eternal Weight of Glory.”
 They are put into the Furnace, only to be
 refined, they shall lose nothing but their
 Dross, and in due Time, will be brought
 forth “ as Gold tried in the Fire.”

COURAGE then, my Christian Bre-
 thren, faint not in your spiritual Warfare,
 your Redeemer goeth before you, he hath
 “ overcome the World,” and in a little while
 you shall share with him in his Triumph.

ONCE more we may observe that, as
 our blessed Redeemer overcame the World
 by Suffering, we also must overcome it in
 like Manner. We are not to repel the
 Reproach and Contempt we meet with,
 by returning “ Railing for Railing,” nor
 rendering “ Evil for Evil,” but must over-
 come our Enemies by Love, meekly sub-
 mitting to the Injuries done us for our Sa-
 viour’s Sake, exercising Patience and For-
 bearance to our bitterest Adversaries. This
 is the true Spirit of Christianity, this is the
 readiest Way to learn Submission to the
 Divine

Divine Will, and to attain the holy Art of Contentment and Resignation*. The Cross is the Way to Glory; and when we consider how earthly and selfish our Hearts are, how stubborn our Wills, how rugged our Tempers, and how boisterous our Passions; we shall see the Necessity of these fiery Trials to refine our Spirits.

THUS have I finished what I designed, and, I hope, in some Measure, fulfilled the Will of the Deceased. As I was a Stranger to him, it cannot be expected that I should enlarge upon his Character. Indeed, Discourses of this kind, are chiefly designed to convey Instruction to the Living, who alone can receive any Benefit from them. Let *his* Death therefore teach *us* to prepare for our own, and put us upon examining how Matters stand between GOD and our Souls, before we “ go hence and be no more seen.”

I shall conclude all with the Words of our excellent Liturgy in the Burial Office.

“ O

* I wish I may have Influence enough with the Reader, to prevail on him to peruse an excellent and masterly Treatise on this Subject. The Title of it is, “ The great Duty of Self-Resignation to the Divine Will.” By the late pious and learned JOHN WORTHINGTON, D. D. Prebendary of Lincoln.

“ O merciful GOD, the Father of our
 “ LORD JESUS CHRIST, who is
 “ the Resurrection and the Life, in whom
 “ whosoever believeth shall live though
 “ he die, and whosoever liveth and be-
 “ lieveth in Him, shall not die eternally,
 “ who also hath taught us (by his holy
 “ Apostle St. *Paul*,) not to be sorry, as
 “ Men without Hope, for them that sleep
 “ in Him; we meekly beseech thee, O
 “ Father, to raise us from the Death of
 “ Sin unto the Life of Righteousness;
 “ that when we shall depart this Life, we
 “ may rest in Him, as our Hope is our
 “ *deceased* Brother doth: And that at the
 “ general Resurrection in the last Day, we
 “ may be found acceptable in thy Sight,
 “ and receive that Blessing, which thy
 “ well-beloved Son shall then pronounce
 “ to all that love and fear thee, saying,
 “ Come ye blessed Children of my Father,
 “ receive the Kingdom prepared for you,
 “ from the Beginning of the World.
 “ Grant this, we beseech thee, O merci-
 “ ful Father, through JESUS CHRIST
 “ our Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*”

F I N I S.



